

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the Abstract with the following:

A method for providing a timestamp for data in a database system, in which the database system operates in accordance with a database schema. The method includes providing a hidden timestamp column in a table in the database system, in which the hidden timestamp column includes a timestamp value for each row of data in the table. The timestamp value indicates a last time a corresponding row of data in the table was previously modified. The hidden timestamp column does not appear in the database schema by default and exposes the timestamp value for a given row of data in the table only to a query that calls the timestamp column by name.